

Message Text

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PASS AID AND USDA

FODAG

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: FAO, OCON
SUBJECT: ESTHER PETERSON'S CALL ON FAO DG SAOUMA

REF: (A) STATE 46291, (B) ROME 4223

SUMMARY: WHITE HOUSE ASSISTANT ESTHER PETERSON'S CALL ON FAO DG
EDOUARD SAOUMA ON MARCH 6 WENT WELL WITH A CLEARER IDEA OF U.S.
POSITION ON NUTRITION POLICY AND ITS RELATION TO HUMAN RIGHTS
COMING OUT OF THE FRANK EXCHANGE. WE NEED TO ANSWER SOME OF
SAOUMA'S SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE U.S. FOOD POLICIES AND CREATE A
STRONGER DIALOGUE WITH HIM BEFORE WE CAN EXPECT THAT THE FAO TO PRESS
AHEAD ON OUR NUTRITION PROPOSALS. END SUMMARY

1. MRS. PETERSON STARTED THE MEETING WITH SAOUMA WITH A BRIEF
GREETING FROM PRESIDENT CARTER AND DR. BOURNE AND THEN OUTLINED
THE U.S. POSITION ON NUTRITION. IN ORDER TO AVOID SURPRISES,
SAOUMA HAD BEEN GIVEN A SUMMARY OF OUR GOALS FOR THE FAO AD
HOC COMTE ON FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICIES, DEPTTEL (A), AND MRS.
PETERSON'S DRAFT STATEMENT, REFTEL (B). THE VERSION OF THE
LATTER DID NOT INCLUDE THE FAO BUDGET IMPLICATIONS OF OUR
NUTRITION GOALS NOR DID IT REFER TO THE NEED REALLOCATE FUNDS
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WITHIN THE FAO REGULAR PROGRAM.

2. SAOUMA, AFTER COURTEOUS COMMENTS OF APPRECIATION FOR MRS.
PETERSON'S VISIT AND GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT AND DR.
BOURNE, THEN COMMENTED THAT HE HAD HEARD U.S. PROPOSALS BEFORE
BUT THEN IN THE EXECUTION OF THE POLICY WE SEEMED TO UNDERCUT
OUR GOALS. FOR EXAMPLE, SAOUMA SAID, HE HAD HEARD FOR A

YEAR THE GREATER IMPORTANCE PRESIDENT CARTER WAS PLACING ON FOOD FOR THE POOR. HOWEVER, IN THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WFP) PLEDGING CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK LAST MONTH, THE U.S. INDICATED THW WFP GOAL OF 950,000 TONS OF FOOD AID IN 1978/79 WAS TOO GREAT AND OFFERED TO SUPPLY ONLY DOLLARS 220 MILLION. SAOUMA NOTED WHEN THE WFP WAS STARTED WE CONTRIBUTED OVER 40 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL. NOW IT WAS RECOGNIZED WE WOULD CONTRIBUTE 25 PERCENT, BUT OUR OFFER OF DOLLARS 220 MILLION IS EVEN LESS THAN 25 PERCENT. HOW, SAYS SAOUMA, CAN HE RELATE THIS ACTUAL CONCRETE FACT WITH THE U.S. PROPOSAL TO INCREASE FOOD AID TO THE POOREST PEOPLE?

3. THE DELEGATION STEERED SAOUMA BACK TO NUTRITION AND REALIZES THAT SAOUMA RELATED A ONE-SIDED PICTURE. HIS POINT, HOWEVER, IS VALID AND WE PROMISED TO BRING IT TO THE ADMINISTRATION'S ATTENTION. THE U.S. MUST RELATE ITS PROPOSALS TO THE FINANCIAL MEANS IT IS WILLING TO SUPPORT.

4. SAOUMA'S NEXT POINT WAS TO REFER TO THE PLANNED U.S. REQUEST FOR 6 MILLION TON FOOD AID TARGET. SAOUMA WAS NOT SURE AND WISHED TO KNOW IF THIS WERE SIX MILLION TONS OVER AND ABOVE THE 5.5 MILLION TONS OF FOOD AID WE PRESENTLY GIVE BILATERALLY AND THROUGH THE WFP. IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO RESOLVE THIS CONFUSION, AND WE OFFERED TO SEEK CLARIFICATION FROM WASHINGTON FOR SAOUMA ON OUR FOOD AID PLANS. THE PROBLEM ARISES OVER CONFUSION AMONG OUR ANNUAL FOOD AID SHIPMENT WHICH THE FAO TOTALS AT 6.4 MILLION TONS IN CONFIDENTIAL

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1977, OUR PROPOSAL OF A NATIONALLY HELD INTERNATIONALLY COORDINATED GAIN RESERVE OF 6 MILLION TONS, OUR PLEDGE OF 4.47 MILLION METRIC TONS OF GRAIN AS ITS MINIMUM ANNUAL COVYMITEMENT TO A FOOD AID CONVENTION, AND THE 500,000 TON EMERGENCY FOOD AID RESERVE. OUR RESERVE PROPOSAL SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH OUR FOOD AID PLANS.

5. HAVING MADE THE ABOVE CRITICISMS OF U.S. ACTIONS, SAOUMA THEN WENT ON TO PRAISE PRESIDENT CARTER'S STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND HIS MAKING THE RIGHT TO FOOD A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT, AND THE U.S. NUTRITION PROPOSALS AS A WAY OF MEETING THE BASIC HUMAN RIGHT OF THE POOREST AS IT WAS DRAWN OUT FOR HIM BY THE U.S. DELEGATE, PETERSON. HE AGREED WITH PETERSON ON THE NEED FOR CONCRETE ACTION, FOR SPECIFIC PROGRAMS AND EXAMPLES. HE STRESSED THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE FAO. HE WELCOMED THE U.S. INITIATIVES AND PROMISED THE FAO WOULD RESPOND "WITHIN THE LIMITS OF ITS PROGRAM".

6. SAOUMA EXPRESSED GREAT APPRECIATION FOR THE FOUR U.S. CANDIDATES FOR THE POSITION OF DIRECTOR OF THE FAO NUTRITION DIVISION.

7. ALSO PRESENT AT THIS MEETING WERE THE FAO'S NEW DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL, RALPH PHILLIPS, RODNEY LEONARD OF COMMUNITY NUTRITION INSTITUTE, AND CHARLES HIGGINSON, DEPUTY U.S. REP TO THE FAO.

8. COMMENT: SAOUMA WAS FRANK AND BLUNT. HE KNOWS HE MUST WORK CLOSELY WITH THE U.S., BUT HE FINDS IT DIFFICULT. HE IS NOT A TRUE SUPPORTER OF OUR NUTRITION PROPOSALS, AND WE HAVEN'T EVEN STARTED TO PERSUADE HIM TO SHIFT MORE RESOURCES OF FAO TO THE NUTRITION FIELD. HOWEVER, PHILLIPS EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT PETERSON HAD GOTTEN ACROSS TO SAOUMA OUR REAL BELIEF IN NUTRITION POLICY AS A WAY TO PROVIDE THE BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS TO THE POOREST AND THAT THE MEETING WENT VERY WELL. THE DELEGATION BELIEVES CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT A DIALOGUE HAS BEEN STARTED AND THAT, THOUGH MUCH MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE, SAOUMA AND THE FAO COULD HELP IF WE CONTINUE TO FOLLOW-UP WITH THE DG. FIRST, WE SHOULD ANSWER HIS QUESTIONS IN PARAS 3-5 ABOVE. SECOND, WE SHOULD BRIEF HIM AT AN EARLY STAGE ON THE OUTCOME OF THE BOURNE TASK FORCE ON FOOD POLICY. THEN, IF SAOUMA SEES CONCRETE ACTION AND A ROLE FOR THE FAO, HE COULD WELL BE A MAJOR ALLY. FINALLY, THE USG MUST ANALYZE SAOUMA, WHO IS INTELLIGENT AND TOUGH, TO DETERMINE HOW BEST WE CAN NEGOTIATE WITH HIM AND WHAT HE WANTS FROM THE U.S. HOLMES

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